

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

----- 018745

O 060200Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8855

INFO AMCON BELIZE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 391

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 6178

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR GT UK BH

SUBJECT: BELIZE

REF: A) STATE 261984 NOTAL B) STATE 262111

1. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISITER MOLINA ORANTES AT 4 PM ON NOVEMBER 5, EXPLAINED THAT HE WAS SPEAKING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS AND CAREFULLY CONVEYED THE MESSAGE CONTAINED IN REFTEL (A) THAT THE BRITISH HAD GIVEN US EVERY ASSURANCE THAT HEIR RECENT REINFORCEMENTS IN BELIZE ARE INTENDED SOLELY FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES, THAT WE OURSELVES ARE CONVINCED OF THIS AND THAT THE BRITISH HAD ASKED US TO REASSURE THE GOG ON THIS POINT. AMBASSADOR ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THE BRITISH HAVE ASKED US TO EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT THEIR RECENT REINFORCEMENTS WILL NOT CAUSE GUATEMALA TO MOVE IN A WAY WHICH MIGHT BE MISCONSTRUED AS A PREPARATION FOR AN ATTACK.

2. PASSING BEYOND HIS INSTRUCTIONS AND MIKING THIS CLEAR TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER, THE AMBASSADOR REVIEWED THE STEPS WHICH HAD LED TO THE PRESENT SITUATION, POINTING OUT BLUNTLY THAT IT WAS "SABER-RATTLING" STATEMENTS FROM GUATEMALAN LEADERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE PRESS AND IN CONGRESS, THAT HAD CAUSED THE BRITISH TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE TOWARD REINFORCEMENTS BY SENDING IN TO BELIZE A NEGLIGIBLE NUMBER OF UNARMED HELI-COPTERS WITH SUPPORT PERSONNEL AND SOME RUBBER BOATS AND

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OTHER MINOR EQUIPMENT. IT WAS THE RECENT INTRODUCTION OF

ADDITIONAL GUATEMALAN TROOPS INTO THE PETEN WHICH OCCURRED ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO THAT HAD CAUSED THE BRITISH TO RESPOND AGAIN, THIS TIME BY SENDING IN MUCH STRONGER REINFORCEMENTS. THE AMBASSADOR SAID ASIDE FROM ANY QUESTION OF WHO WAS RIGHT AND WHO WAS WRONG AND WHO STARTED THE BUILD-UP IN THE FIRST PLACE, HE STRONGLY URGED THAT GUATEMALA NOT CONTINUE THE ESCALATION AND ABOVE ALL THE GUATEMALA AVOID ANY ACTIONS WHICH COULD BE MISCONSTRUED AS INDICATING AN INTENTION TO ATTACK OR WHICH COULD LEAD TO CONFLICT BY INADVERTENCE.

3. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY AND SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THE BRITISH FORCES WERE IN BELIZE FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES AND NOT TO ATTACK GUATEMALA BUT THE IMPORTANT THING WOULD BE GUATEMALAN PUBLIC REACTION AND THE REACTION OF THE MILITARY. THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT PUBLIC REACTION MIGHT BE INFLUENCED AND CALMED BY GIVING THE PUBLIC CORRECT INFORMATION. THE FOREIGN MINISTER DID NOT TAKE UP THE POINT.

4. MOLINA PROFESSED SUPRISE (COMMENT: AND WE BELIEVE HIM) THAT THERE HAD BEEN RECENT GUATEMALAN TROOP MOVEMENTS INTO THE PETEN. HE SAID HE KNEW OF NO PLAN TO MOVE GUATEMALAN TROOPS INTO THE PETEN OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT TO THE AMBASSADOR OF OCTOBER 14 WHEN THE PRESIDENT DISCUSSED THE GUATEMALAN REACTION TO THE INITIAL BRITISH REINFORCEMENTS IN BELIZE.

5. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR, FUTHER UNDER INSTRUCTIONS INFORMED THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT THE US IS MAKING SOME SUGGESTIONS TO THE UK AS TO WAYS TO EASE THE SITUATION AND OUTLINED THESE SUGGESTION TO HIM (REFTEL B), MOLINA SHOWED GREAT INTEREST. HE EXPRESSED DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT ANY SORT OF AN AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED BETWEEN THE GOG AND THE UK PRIOR TO THE PASSAGE OF THE UK RESOLUTION IN VIEW OF THE SHORTNESS OF TIME. MOLINA POINTED OUT THAT ON THE OTHER HAND IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOG TO ANNOUNCE ANY AGREEMENT WITH THE UK TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE UK RESOLUTION SINCE THE PASSAGE OF THE RESOLUTION

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 GUATEMALA 6178

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WILL CERTAINLY RESULT IN A STRONG ADVERS PUBLIC REACION AND OUTCRY IN GUATEMALA. EVEN IF THERE COULD BE PRIVATE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UK AND GUATEMALA IN THE SHORT TIME REMAINING BEFORE UN ACTION ON THE UK RESOLUTION SOME FURTHER PERIOD WOULD BE REQUIRED THEREAFTER TO ALLOW PUBLIC OUTCRY TO DIE DOWN AND TO PREPARE PUBLIC OPINION.

6. MOLINA WENT ON TO SAY THAT SUBMISSION OF THE BELIZE QUESTION TO THE ICJ REMAINS A POSSIBILITY PROVIDING IT IS SUBMITTED ON THE GROUNDS OF BOTH LAW AND EQUITY. A PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY MADE SUCH A SUGGESTION AND IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO JUSTIFY ITS POSITION BY REFERRING TO THE PREVIOUS COMMITMENT. HOWEVER, SUCH A SUBMISSION WOULD REQUIRE CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL SINCE IT WAS A MATTER DEALING WITH NATIONAL TERRITORY AND CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL WAS UNLIKELY IN THE ATMOSPHERE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PASSAGE OF THE UK RESOLUTION. HE MUCH PREFERRED A SOLUTION THROUGH NEGOTIATION, HOWECHR, THAN A SUBMISSION OF THE PROBLEM TO THE ICJ.

7. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID SKINNER-KLEE IN A CONVERSATION IN NEW YORK WITH IVOR RICHARD NOVEMBER 4 HAD RESPONDED TO RICHARD'S QUESTION AS TO HOW TO POUR WATER ON THE SITUATION BY SUGGESTING THAT BOTH BELIZE RESOLUTIONS BE WITHDRAWN. THIS, SAID THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WOULD BE THE BEST WAY OF DEFUSING THE SITUATION. NEGOTIATIONS COULD THEN CONTINUE WITH  
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A BETTER PROSPECT OF SUCCESS. HE DID NOT GIVE A DIRECT ANSWER WHEN THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHAT RICHARD'S REACTION TO THE SUGGESTION HAD BEEN AND DID NOT PURSUE THE MATTER WHEN THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED STRONG DOUBT AS TO THE PRACTICABILITY OF THE SUGGESTION.

8. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT IT APPEARED HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT THE UK RESOLUTION OF BELIZE WILL BE PASSED. THE FOREIGN MINISTER RELUCTANTLY AGREED. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THE US IS CONCERNED THAT THE TERMS OF THE UK RESOLUTION MAY BE INTERPRETED IN GUATEMALA AS BEING SO NARROW AS TO LEAVE

NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE TO NEGOTIATE. IN FACT, SUCH COMMENTS WERE ALREADY APPEARING IN THE AFTERNOON GUATEMALAN PRESS. IF THE FOREIGN MINISTER FELT THERE WAS TOO LITTLE TIME BEFORE THE PASSAGE OF THE RESOLUTION TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE BRITISH REGARDING THE BASIS FOR ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT PUBLIC OUTCRY AND EMOTION AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE RESOLUTION WOULD PREVENT A PROMPT AGREEMENT TO PROCEED WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS, WHAT THEN WAS THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S ESTIMATE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONFLICT? MOLINA SAID THE SITUATION IS "EXPLOSIVE". THE GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA STRONGLY WANTS TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE BELIZE PROBLEM THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND STRONGLY WISHES TO AVOID CONFLICT. THE REACTION OF THE MILITARY IS UNPREDICTABLE, HOWEVER, AND A BORDER INCIDENT COULD LEAD TO UNFORESEEABLE CONSEQUENCES.

9. THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD SPEAK OFF-THE-RECORD AND VERY FRANKLY. HE WAS NOT CONVINCED THAT ALL OF THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY WERE EQUALLY CHAUVINISTIC ABOUT BELIZE NOR DESIROUS OF TAKING FORCEFUL ACTION DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY ALL MUST MAINTAIN A UNITED FRONT AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY FOLLOW ALONG SHOULD MILITARY ACTION BE DECIDED ON. THE FOREIGN MINISTER AGREED BUT SAID THAT WHILE NOT ALL GUATEMALAN OFFICERS MIGHT PRIVATELY BE IN AGREEMENT, A CERTAIN NUMBER OF THEM WERE HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ON THE SUBJECT AND THEY HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE AND THIS IS WHERE THE DANGER LIES.

10. CONTINUING, THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE FELT ON A PERSONAL BASIS THAT FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE UK AND THE GOG MUST BE REALISTIC. THE FACTS OF LIFE IN THE WORLD TODAY FAVOR INDEPENDENCE FOR DEPENDENT TERRITORIES WHO SEEK  
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IT. ALSO SHOULD THE UK BE WILLING TO DISCUSS TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS TO GUATEMALA, WHICH WAS NOT AT ALL SURE, IT WAS EVEN LESS SURE THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO SELL SUCH AN IDEA TO PRICE. MOLINA REPLIED THAT GUATEMALA HAD BEEN PREPARED IN THE LAST CONVERSATIONS TO SETTLE FOR "A SMALL PIECE OF TERRITORY" WITH THE BOUNDARY ALONG THE MONKEY RIVER. THE AMBASSADOR LAUGHED AND SAID THAT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE A "SMALL PIECE OF TERRITORY" TO HIM AND HE DOUBTED IF IT WOULD TO PRICE. THIS HAD BEEN THE GUATEMALAN SUGGESTION BUT SURELY THIS WAS NEGOTIABLE. MOLINA LOOKED SLIGHTLY TAKEN ABACK BUT SAID "EVERYTHING IS NEGOTIABLE."

11. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO STUDY THE US SUGGESTIONS AND LET HIM HAVE THE GOG REACTION. THE US PURPOSE IS TO TRY TO ASSIST BOTH SIDES TO SEE THEIR WAY CLEAR TO CONSTRUCTIVE AND REALISTIC NEGOTIATIONS FOLLOWING ACTION ON THE BELIZE PROBLEM IN THE UNGA AND, MEANWHILE, TO AVOID ANY POSSIBILITY OF ARMED CONFLICT OR THE USE OF FORCE

WHICH WE STRONGLY OPPOSE. MOLINA EXPRESSED HIS WARM APPRECIATION AND SAID HE WOULD STUDY THE SUGGESTIONS CLOSELY, MANY OF WHICH APPEAR TO BE MUCH IN LINE WITH SUGGESTIONS THE GUATEMALANS THEMSELVES HAVE ALREADY PUT FORWARD. HE NOTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR WOULD BE SEEING THE PRESIDENT ALONE AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST AT 10 AM NOVEMBER 6. HE SAID HE WAS SURE THE PRESIDENT WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS.

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## Message Attributes

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